The Granstedt Family: New Scandinavia Pioneers, the Last Indian Killing and a Movie Star

Some of the earliest pioneers to settle in Republic County were members of the Scandinavian Agriculture Society of Chicago. This organization brought people over from Sweden to settle on tracts of land the Society had purchased along the Republican River. Due to rapid population growth after the first flush of industrialization, there was not enough land and jobs for the Swedes of the 1860's. This lead to mass migration. Among the first five Swedes to settle the Agriculture Society's land was one August Frederick Granstedt (sometimes spelled Granstadt or Grandstadt). He, along with his father Frans, and his son Theodore, came from Eksjo in southern Sweden to start a new life in Republic County in 1868. By the limited accounts available, they were a respected and hardworking family.

An incredible series of misfortunes that befell this family of immigrants over time began in 1869. Young Malcolm Granstedt and his brother August, recent immigrants and nephews of August, were assigned to watch the settler's horses while the adult males worked. There was less concern at the time about Indian raids as Tall Bull's Cheyenne Dog Soldiers had recently left the Republican River Valley. (Dog Soldiers were a Cheyenne war society known to be aggressive and effective). However, on that June day two Native Americans rode their horses rapidly toward the boys. August ran and made it to their housing, but Malcolm stayed at his lookout post. Historian Isaac Savage stated that Malcom was knocked down and then shot by the natives. Another account given by one Harry Wallen, an eyewitness, said that the boy was speared in the back and died from that wound. Nonetheless the boy, somewhere between 11 and 16, was the last person killed by Indians in Republic County.

Chief Tall Bull

August F. Granstedt continued with his life as a settler in what was to become known as Scandia, Kansas with his death occurring in 1901. The Granstedt family made considerable contributions to Republic County over the generations. August's son Theo and his wife Emma, Theo, Jr., Ethel, Irene, Teddy and Vivian stayed in Scandia until 1920. For unknown reasons, Theo and family moved to Mountain View, California in the San Francisco Bay area.

Their daughter Irene was just 14 and a California resident for one year, when she made statewide headlines. In a most unfortunate manner. The tabloids of the day had a field day with details, speculation and outright scandalous lies. Young Irene had a 17 year old boyfriend, Harold Galloway. On April 19, 1922 Irene borrowed a .25 caliber pistol from a friend. Later that day Irene shot Harold. Rumor had it

The Long Unsolved Murder of a Young Belleville Woman-Tragic History
Ed Glenn Director/Curator, Republic County Historical Society & Museum

Sometimes history impacts nearly everyone in a given area and sometimes history impacts a few in a very direct and difficult manner. This most unfortunate piece of history we are dealing with here is in part both. There is likely nothing quite as painful as the unexpected death of a very young person. And an unnecessary and brutal death of a young person is horribly traumatic to the family and community. On August 31, 1977 Don and Marcia Leeding of Belleville learned that they had such a tragic event happen within their family.

Their daughter Sharon Kay Leeding, a graduate of Belleville High School and just twenty one years old, was found viciously murdered at the rural home of her boyfriend, Mike Dorman. His farm was just across the county line in Cloud County. One cannot imagine how this family must have felt in receiving such horrific news.

The Leeding family had moved to Belleville in 1967. Marcia ran the popular Bakers Dress Shop and Don owned the Don Leeding Insurance Agency. The family moved from Santa Monica, California, where Sharon was born in 1956, to Overland Park, Kansas where they lived for nine years. The Leedings came to Belleville in 1967 with Sharon and her brother Don. The family fit in well with Republic County life by all available accounts.

Sherrie, as she was known high school years, participated in Choir, Kayettes, one year of volleyball and track, was in a school play and went to State for the DECA contest. Not an overachiever, but fit in well and did well in most classes. Ms. Leeding graduated for Belleville High School in 1974. Sherrie had taken a job in Lincoln, Nebraska sometime after graduation from high school.

The Belleville Telescope reported Ms. Leeding's engagement to Mr. William Tunberg of Lincoln, Nebraska and they were married on September 12, 1975. Sherrie apparently returned home to live some time later.

She developed a relationship with Mike Dorman from Cloud County and was living in his home at the time of her death. (Let us say right here that Mr. Dorman and everyone directly involved with her life at that tragic time were thoroughly investigated and were determined to have no involvement with her murder in any fashion.) The terrible tragedy of her death is compounded by remaining officially unsolved to this day.

The first news reports of this tragedy indicated that Ms. Leeding's body was discovered in her car and that she had been shot to death. Her body was in a 1970 Ford Mustang and was discovered by Mr. Dorman's sister and sister-in-law around 5:00 p.m. The first press release from law enforcement officials read as follows:

> *"At approximately 5:30 p.m. Aug.31 (Wednesday) law enforcement Officers were dispatched to the residence of Mike Dorman, Rural Route 2, Concordia (location given). At the residence, officers found the body of Ms. Sharon K. Leeding in the front seat of a vehicle. Ms. Leeding's death appears to have been the result of gunshot wounds. There are no suspects at this time."*

This immediate report as to cause of death lead to considerable confusion and some mistrust later on as we shall see. The local Cloud County Sheriff, Fred Modlin, a deputy sheriff, the Concordia ambulance and Assistant Cloud County Coroner, Dr. Thayne Coulter first arrived on the scene. The crime scene was immediately sealed off and an investigation began. Numerous other area law enforcement officials and four agents from the Kansas Bureau of Investigation

A Toy Factory in Republic County

Ed Glenn, Republic County Historical Society & Museum Director/Curator

Believe it or not, Republic County, specifically Belleville, was the home of a factory that produced toys! A distant memory now, the Columbia Toy Products company of Kansas City, Missouri opened a production plant in Belleville in 1965.

Columbia Toy Product - Bunnies

Columbia Toy Products, Inc. was created in 1937 by one Sherman Rosenberg, a Kansas City, Missouri entrepreneur. With $200 and high hopes, Rosenberg saw a need for the production of stuffed toys. He and a relative set up a shop in a car garage at home. They designed stuffed toys and worked out the details of cutting, stuffing and sewing of the toys as they went along. Rosenberg quickly learned that the fancy details on these types of toys were for getting the parents to buy them-the children really didn't care. Cute noses, eyes and colors caught mothers' eyes and the toys then sold!

World War II, starting for the United States in 1942, stopped the production of toys by the company. Almost every manufacturing company in the United States was converted to the production of needed war materials. We are not sure what products the Columbia Toy Products company produced for the war effort, but they did stop producing toys. According to company information, during the final year of production before World War II, the company grossed $116,000. A tidy sum for the day and quite a return on a $200 investment!

After the war ended in 1945, the Columbia Toy Products, Inc. rapidly expanded their production of stuffed toys. Post World War II life included one of the largest baby booms the United States had experienced. The war had helped bring the country out of the Great Depression of the 1930's. Massive spending on the war effort and millions of men (and women) being out of the county meant money was readily available and consumer products could once again be manufactured and sold. From 1946-1964, the so called Baby Boomers showed up by the millions! In fact seventy six million Baby Boomers were born in that generation.

This clearly meant that the opportunity to sell toys was at an all-time high! The Columbia Toy Products company had moved from $116,000 in sales in 1944 to $1,000,000 in 1955. This heady experience caused the company to expand rapidly to keep up with the consumer demand. With so much recreation time now available, Columbia Toy moved into wholesale sales to chain retail stores (J.C. Pennys, Montgomery Ward, etc.), amusement parks and carnivals, all using

Bits O' History, Republic County - 1970

By Ed Glenn, Director/Curator, Republic County Historical Society & Museum

As a youngster growing up in the 1960's one of my favorite parts of a newspaper and some maga "Ripley's Believe It or Not" cartoons and stories. The cartoons were fairly primitive artistically. T or unusual events that drew the reader's attention. Sometimes funny, sometimes sad and sometim homage to "Ripley's Believe It or Not," we will present a series of happenings in Republic Count noble year of 1970. We hope you will enjoy these unusual memories condensed down primarily f Telescope articles of that year.

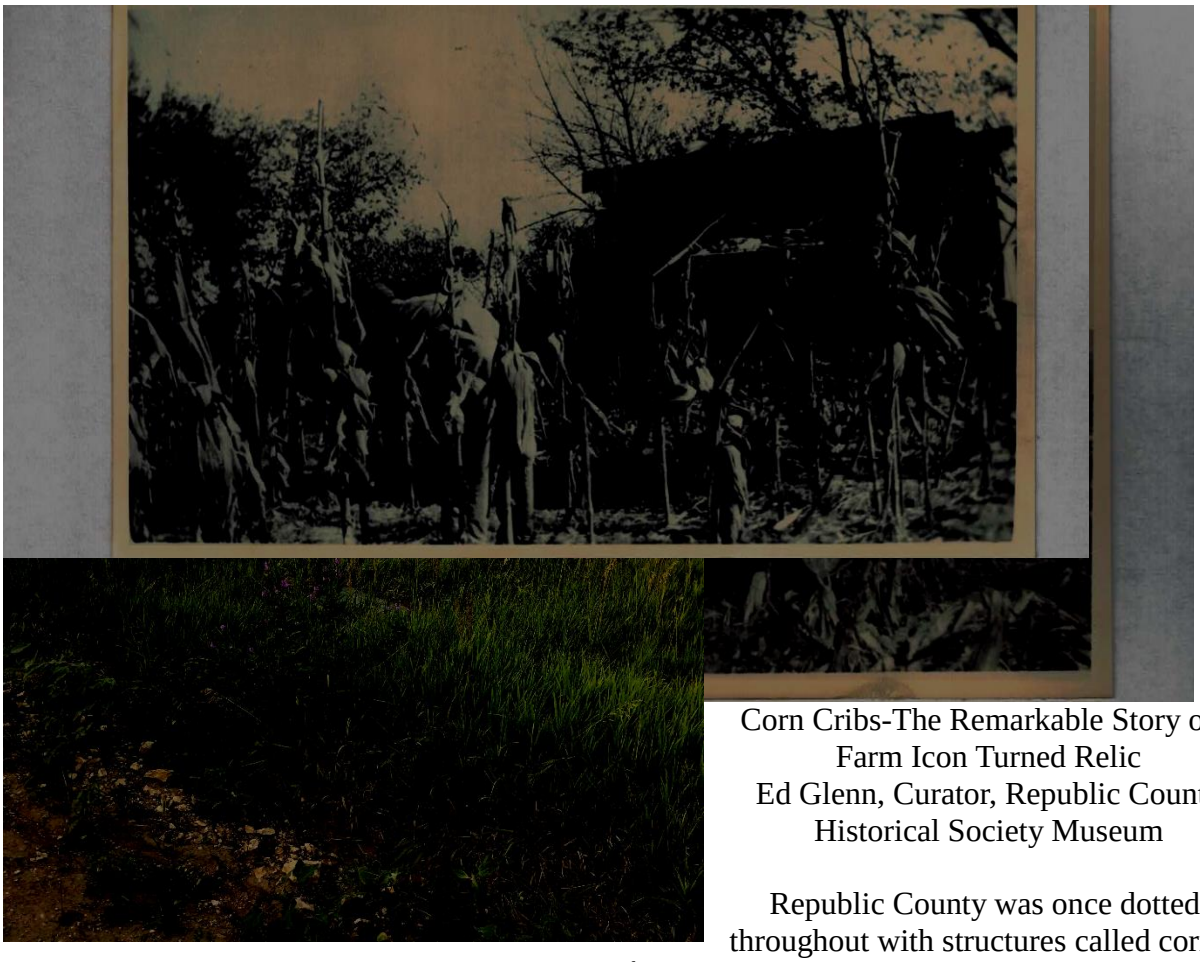
On Saturday night, August 30, 1970, a sprint car went through and over the northwest corner fenc Belleville High Banks race track, tearing out over forty feet of wood fencing in the process. The r by Leon Lahodny of Nebraska, hit several parked vehicles outside the track and finally landed on Lincoln Continental, worth $7,000, with just over 100 miles on the odometer. Oddly enough the c Lincoln, M. E. Dale of Beatrice, Nebraska owned one of the sprint cars competing in the race at t accident! The Lincoln was deemed a total loss, likely dampening the enjoyment of the racing by l Lahodny was freed from his sprint car and suffered cuts and bruises in the accident. My memory but I don't think the wooden fences lasted much longer at the track.

On Monday, February 2, 1970, the Belleville Fire Department was called out for a grass fire in th of S Street. The Fire Department's brand new Mack pumper truck, absolutely would not start des housed in a heated building. The truck was also started regularly to insure it would start when nee As reported in the Belleville Telescope, the Belleville Fire Department was "red-faced" regarding truck not starting when needed! Thankfully, an older fire truck went to the grass fire and got it sa with little damage.

February 1, 1970, found a Yorkshire sow on the Mr. & Mrs. Al Havel farm near Cuba giving birt litter of pigs. Eleven regular pigs were born, along with a set of Siamese or conjoined pigs. Descr at the heads and ribs, with eight legs, two tails, two snouts and one jaw, the unfortunate little pork survive. This writer had the misfortune to see this oddity, as it was given to Hillcrest High School teacher, Henry Barstow, who brought it to school. Thanks so much, Mr. Barstow.

A Wayne landmark burned to the ground on Monday, February 23, 1970. The Wayne Grade Scho cleaned for a Citizen's Band radio club meeting on that Saturday. Those doing the cleaning, who unnamed here, decided that the best way to get the weeds away from the building would be to set Later in the afternoon, a passerby saw the roof of the school on fire. The fire was on the opposite building from those who were burning the weeds so they did not see the fire. On being called, the Cuba Fire Departments responded to the fire, but were not able to save the old building. Even the fell into the fire and was destroyed. The Wayne Grade School was built in 1921 and last served st 1965. As it has been frequently said in these situations and almost always sadly, "it seemed like a the time."

From a January, 1970 Telescope, apparently in a "holiday mood" a Belleville man whom we will "Mark" drove into the Deep Rock Service Station on 36 Highway with two coyotes hanging from The operator of the said station soon found out that "Mark" did not want to buy anything and did leave the premises either. "Mark" took out a pistol and aimed it at the dead coyotes. He later shot shotgun, thankfully into the air and not into the dead coyotes or a gas pump. Law enforcement wa "Mark" then decided to leave. During his discussion with the Sheriff, "Mark" did admit that he m "a little" to drink. That little to drink eventually cost "Mark" a $51.15 fine for being drunk in pub disturbing the peace. Happy Holidays, "Mark!"



Corn Cribs-The Remarkable Story of a Farm Icon Turned Relic
Ed Glenn, Curator, Republic County Historical Society Museum

Republic County was once dotted throughout with structures called corn cribs. From the early homesteaders' era in the 19th Century until about the 1950's-60's, these humble but important structures were a mainstay of farming here. And Native Americans living in Republic County had their own corn storage methods long before settlers came.

First things first-just what is a corn crib? Before the modern era of combines that are able to pick and shell corn, the crop was harvested with the corn still on the cobs. This required an ability to store whole corn in a safe manner that would also allow continued drying. Native American introduced corn to the first Europeans coming to America. They also taught them how to grow corn and of course how to store corn for future use. Many tribes had learned to build structures for just that purpose. So structures built up off the ground to help keep out vermin and ventilated for helping the corn dry is exactly what a corn crib is.

With corn being an important financial generator in Republic County, a quick review of corn itself is in order. Corn was first domesticated by people living in Southern Mexico some 7,000 to 10,000 years ago. A wild grass called teosinte grew along the rivers there. Its seeds were small and few in number on a cob-like part. The people found in seeds were edible. They started planting the seeds in locations convenient for them. These primitive farmers noticed that some of the teosinte plants grew more and bigger seeds and began selecting these for their seeds to plant, repeating this improvement of their crops each year. From these efforts, modern corn was developed. By the time the first Europeans came to America, corn growing was widespread, reaching as far north as what is now Maine. One of the reasons corn is so important is that it is now able to be grown from Siberia to the southern plains of South America!

The very earliest people growing corn picked it by hand. This was the standard way of harvesting corn for many centuries. We have a number of shucking hooks and pegs on display at the Museum, showing that our early farmers certainly picked their corn by hand. We also have photos.

Don McChesney, the Face of Grassroots Racing History in Republic County

by Ed Glenn, Director/Curator, Republic County Historical Society Museum

With a firm handshake and a quick smile, meeting Don McChesney for the first time is in many ways like meeting any other man in North Central Kansas. And like most Republic County men, Don is quickly sizing you up and you can feel it. Not in any bad way, just the way rural people react to people we don't know.

What you don't see in Don right away is the fierce auto racing competitor with an encyclopedic knowledge of the history of midget car and sprint car racing and of the Belleville High Banks race track. With the famous High Banks of Belleville hosting auto racing for about 110 years, auto racing is in the DNA of Republic County. And it is the lifeblood of Don McChesney.

Don was raised near Munden, Kansas and lives there presently. He relates that two of this uncles were big fans of auto racing. They took him to racetracks in the area, including the Belleville High Banks. A great love of auto racing was started as a child and continues to this day. McChesney saw his first race at the famed Belleville track in 1951 and amazingly enough, has only missed two races held at the track since then! Many hundreds of races for which he was a witness (or competitor, or helping in the pits).

As he was bitten by the racing bug, Don looked for his chance to race. In 1965 Don bought a real race car. An old Model A coupe with a Ford six cylinder engine. He got a trailer and one spare tire in the deal. He was now a real racer! In his first year, a seventh place finish in Fairbury and a six place finish at Beatrice were highlights, and quite good for a novice racer. A great competitor with the will to win, Don got chances to race on the Belleville High Banks throughout the years and is remembered as a match for the competition and for the High Banks as well.

One High Banks memory shared:

> "We (he and a competitor) were coming out of Turn Four, racing hard, and got tangled up. I looked up and we were both heading straight for the flagman! In those days there was no flag stand, the flagman stood on the track. We didn't hit him but I don't know which one of the three of us was the most scared!"

While he downplays his involvement, Don has likely turned more competitive laps on the Belleville High Banks than any other living person. As a matter of fact, now in his ninth different decade on this Earth, Don still competes at the High Banks. Working with the Kansas Antique Racers and the Colorado Vintage Oval Racers organizations, McChesney organizes the Belleville Vintage Nationals for historic open wheel race cars every other year. It is an absolutely beautiful show that should not be missed! Don brings his two vintage super modifieds to race in the event on the High Banks. And he still turns a pretty quick lap!

Don McChesney taught school for many years, along with his wife Karol. They were one of those salt of the earth teaching couples that have kept rural schools going for a very long time. The kind of teachers who not only teach their assigned classes, but sponsor activity groups, coach, drive the bus, sell tickets and any and everything else that needs done. The McChesneys taught several places, including Cuba and Belleville in Republic County. And still found time for active involvement in auto racing!

In his decades of racing and other involvement, Don has gotten to know a vast number of dirt track car owners and drivers, reading like a Who's Who of such racing since the 1950's. This has added so much to his long time role as Curator of the High Banks Hall of Fame National Midget Auto Racing Museum in Belleville, KS. McChesney can call owners and family members of vintage race cars and arrange for cars to be displayed at the Museum and often donated to the Museum. Drivers know Don and will donate materials to the museum and come to the annual Hall of Fame Induction on Don's word. Sprint car driver, NASCAR driver and television racing announcer Kenny Schrader dropped everything to come to his own induction into the High

Food Traditions in Republic County

Ed Glenn, Director/Curator, Republic County Historical Society and Museum

In 1927, a neighbor to the northwest of Republic County, Willa Cather, wrote the following in her great book, Death Comes for the Archbishop: *"A soup like this is not the work of one man. It is the result of a constantly refined tradition. There are nearly a thousand years of tradition in this soup."* More recently, food advocate Carlo Petrini of Italy stated, *"Food history is as important as a baroque church. Governments should recognize cultural history and protect traditional foods. A cheese is as worthy of protecting as a 16th Century building."*

These vital sentiments are certainly upheld in Republic County. However it is primarily our citizens who value and uphold local food history and traditions. It is a fact that people of many nationalities settled Republic County. It is likewise safe to say that the eastern side of our county was settled primarily by Czech people (The Czech areas of Europe has been divided many times. People of what we now call Czech descent are actually of Czech, Slovak, Bohemian and Moravian descent primarily). The western side of Republic County was settled primarily by Swedish immigrants. Other Scandinavian countries also settled, (primarily Norway) but mostly by Swedish immigrants. We can of course find German, Irish, French and others among the founders of Republic County, but for the sake of predominant food history and traditions, we will focus on Swedish and Czech here.

Recognizing our pioneering ancestors with food is indeed a tradition upheld in Republic County. The kolache makers in Cuba, Agenda, Narka, Munden, Belleville and Republic (and there are some elsewhere!) are honoring family pioneers and home country food tradition brought to American 150 years ago and later. This is so with those who prepare lutefisk or pickled herring in Scandia, the Kackley area or Norway are also honoring their home country food traditions and history as well.

Pickled Herring

Republic County, Kansas was created in 1860 by the Kansas legislature. The Pawnee and other Native American tribes had been in and through Republic County for centuries. Early French trappers came through the county, as did Zebulon Pike in 1806. With the passing of the Homestead Act of 1862, farmland was available to anyone who could claim and upgrade 160 acres, after which they would be given title to the land. Many Americans came for the land, as did many immigrants from other countries. The Scandinavian Agricultural Society of Chicago bought land along the Republican River in Republic County, and many people of Swedish heritage came to New Scandinavia as Scandia was first called. Of course, these pioneer settlers brought with them their language, culture and foods. And as author Mark Kurlansky stated, "*Food is a central activity of mankind and one of the single most significant trademarks of a culture."*

It would be unthinkable to discuss Swedish or Norwegian foods without lutefisk. This humble preserved cod or other whitefish has taken on legendary status. People tend to like lutefisk or really, really hate lutefisk! Norway and Sweden are both exposed to the sea and fishing and seafood has been a mainstay of their diet since likely before history was written down, certainly for over a thousand years. The Gulf of Bothnia and the North Sea have long provided fish for Norway and Sweden. Herring, mackerel, cod and whiting are and have been fished

The Great Gold Rush of Republic County!

Ed Glenn, Director/Curator, Republic County Historical Museum

February 15, 2022

From history, movies and television, we all have images of the 19th Century gold strikes in California, the Klondike, the Dakotas and Colorado, to name some of the most famous. People taking unbelievable risks, sailing around South America, walking halfway across North America just to take a chance of striking it rich with gold, gold I say! No hardship was too much to bear for the chance to become rich by mining gold. Dreams of Sutter's Mill drove the 49ers at a mad pace. "There's gold in them thar hills!" was the rallying cry.

And a handful of people became rich from gold fever. Most though never struck gold at all or such a low grade claim that no money was made. Also, prices were massively inflated in every gold rush town, so even if you got money it was hard to keep. And the most durable fortunes came from those who sit up shop and sold supplies to the prospectors! You may be familiar with one Levi Strauss, who made a fortune selling denim work pants to the miners. Yes, those Levis! These facts never dimmed the urge to find gold and make a fortune nearly overnight.

In fact, Republic County has its own gold rush. During the Great Depression, 1929-1940, the American economy was nearly completely destroyed and life was tough in Republic County. The Depression and the Dust Bowl dirt storms had wreaked havoc on farming and Republic County. It is not the least bit surprising that anything offering hope of a better financial situation would catch the attention of people in Republic County such was the level of desperation.

As the story is told, one Joseph J. Malir, Jr., an engineer from Denver, Colorado and an Ellsworth County, Kansas native, began gold prospecting on branches of rivers originating in Colorado. He came to Kansas and Nebraska, figuring that the most obvious gold close to the sources of rivers in the Rocky Mountains had been primarily mined out by the 20th Century. Perhaps gold was carried in smaller amounts further downstream to places that no one had yet discovered. Malir was not the only one with this idea, but he was the one that came to Republic County and the Republican River with gold fever beating in his heart. He was a knowledgeable engineer, below is paperwork from the U. S. Patent Office for one of his inventions:

JOSEPH J. MALIR Jr.

Hand Tools and the Building of Republic County

Ed Glenn, Director/Curator, Republic County Historical Society and Museum

Can you imagine a world in which every piece of wood and every piece of metal for use by people had to be hand crafted individually with a variety of non-electric hand tools? You want a widow to fit in your frame? You will need a hand plane to make it fit. No factory made windows with exact dimensions in each window. You need a door hinge? It will have to be hand forged, pried into shape with anvil tools, and a good beating with a blacksmith's hammer to get what you need!

Well, this hypothetical world WAS Republic County about one hundred and twenty or so years ago. Until the full force of the Industrial Revolution caught up with mass production methods, even the tools needed to make tools were all handmade! Almost everything made in Republic County from the time of immigrant settlement until well into the 20th Century was made by hand and hand tools. The planes, axes, hammers, wrenches, adzes, hand drills and so on were vital to building our County and communities. A good carpenter or good blacksmith were worth their weight in gold. A fast and accurate construction lather was always in demand. (Before drywall, lathes were cut to be hammered onto the studs of a wall, spaced a little bit apart so the plaster would have a space to "curl" into and stay in place when it was smoothed out and dried. Lathers cut and nailed the lathes. This was the preferred technique for building walls beginning in the 1700's.)

Bertil Olson in His Tool Room

The Republic County Historical Museum is proud of having possession and to display one of the largest collections of hand tools from the 19th and early 20th Century anywhere. Two brothers, both farmers in the Courtland area, collected these tools for over forty years. Bertil Olson was the primary hand tool collector and his brother Andy focused one cylinder "hit and miss" engines. Bertil was also a master carpenter and toymaker. The brothers worked together on their irrigated cropland and had a sizeable hog operation as well. Their collections were donated to the Historical Museum and they are a vital part of the museum today.

Horse High, Bull Strong and Hog Tight! The Intriguing Story of the Hedge Trees in Republic County

Ed Glenn, Curator, Republic County Historical Society Museum

It is nearly impossible to drive anywhere in rural Republic County without seeing rows of hedge trees. A native species of Texas, the hedge tree, bois-d'arc, Osage orange or most correct scientifically, Maclura pomifera, are not native to Kansas and Republic County at all. Yet they are everywhere! Casual observation would indicate that these trees, planted obviously long ago in straight rows, served as fences and boundary markers and this is true.

But as most historical things in Kansas and Republic County, the story of how this particular tree came to be imported into Republic County in such huge numbers is much more complicated and interesting. And of course, it would not be pioneer Kansas without battles between livestock producers and crop farmers as a part of the Hedge Tree story! Dodge City, Abilene, Ellsworth, Wichita and the trails leading to them were not the only fights over crops versus free range cattle.

First, some quick background. Laws in the United Sates regarding open range for grazing and fencing to protect crops from livestock date back to British Common law imported from England during the colonization. In early Colonial America, even land that was privately owned was fair game for cattle, sheep and goats to use for grazing by anyone's livestock. This seemed to have worked in 17th and 18th Century pastoral England, but led to problems in the Colonies. Getting vegetable gardens and grain crops trampled by cattle was not seen as a good thing. Massachusetts passed the first laws required livestock to be contained and was soon followed by other colonies. Of course cattlemen did not like the loss of free range.

Later on, free range grazing in Texas and other parts of the Great Plains became part of the landscape, with the cattle drives of Western lore occurring in the mid to late 1800's. In the early existence of the Territory and State of Kansas, Fence Laws were passed. In 1869, a law was passed that required adjoining land owners to work together on fencing, stating "it shall be the duty of each to build one half of the fence line." The next year, 1861, the Legislature passed additional laws clarifying details on how joint fences are to be maintained, and how a negligent party can be compelled to build and maintain their half of the fence.

With sufficient trees in most of Eastern Kansas, wood for traditional fencing was available. Problems came when settlers moved further west in Kansas. The High Plains did not have an abundance of trees, hardly enough for homes. Certainly settlers in Republic County had a need for fences, both legally and practically. But what to make fences out of was a vexing problem. The invention and widespread use of barbed wire was some years away, so that was not an immediate solution.

The solution came primarily though living fences created out of the Maclura pomifera, or Osage orange trees. This tough native of Texas, Louisiana and southern Arkansas grew quickly, had serious thorns to

George and Ophelia Stewart, Homesteaders in Republic County

The Homestead Act of 1862 opened up millions of acres of publicly owned land to settlement and land ownership by individuals. The land was broken into 160 acre tracts. This had long been a goal of Northern politicians, but was fiercely opposed by Southern politicians, preferring that massive tracts of land be given to plantation owners and farmed under the slave system. This would have also insured that states created out of westward expansion would not all be Free States, a great fear of the South. The Civil War eliminated the votes of the South and land ownership was opened up to individuals in small claims through the Homestead Act.

We can never know exactly why any particular family decided to give up the life they knew and gambled on homesteading in Republic County, Kansas. Of course we know in general that people were seeking a better life or to become landowners for the first time. Many people had their lives and livelihoods destroyed by the Civil War and a fresh start was in order. Others had extremely limited opportunities in life.

But in 1883, when George and Ophelia Stewart of Bucyrus, Ohio, married for just three years, packed their belongings into a covered wagon and set out for Republic County, we can only speculate as to why they chose to make such an audacious move. Homesteading was indeed a daring and risky move. The requirements for taking full ownership of the homestead were to live on the designated land, build a home, make improvements, and farm it for a minimum of five years. This seems like a lot of work, but possible. In fact, the majority of homesteaders did not complete these requirements. Many had never farmed before, did not have sufficient funds to buy the needed farm equipment, livestock and seeds, had never dealt with the harsh weather of the Plains, insect infestations or simply could not bear the isolation and unceasing demands of such an undertaking.

George and Ophelia Stewart were among those determined and tough enough to deal with homesteading in Republic County in the 1880's. George was the sixth of eleven children born to Nicholas and Catherine Stewart, a farm family in Allen County, Ohio. It is easy enough to imagine the opportunities for a sixth born child of a farmer being very limited in options in the 1880's. Ophelia, however, was the oldest of four children of a carpenter, Washington Diddie and his wife Maria of Bucyrus, Ohio. Washington Diddie owned property valued at $2,000 in 1860 according to the 1860 Census. They were not wealthy, but certainly not poor for that time and place. We know from items belonging to George and Ophelia Stewart recently donated to the Republic County Historical Museum that Ophelia had lovely clothing made by professional seamstresses and an expensive camel back trunk given to her by her mother.

George and Ophelia were married on August 25, 1880 in Washington County, Ohio. Ophelia was 34 years old at that time. This was unusually old for a woman entering into marriage in the late nineteenth Century. In both the 1860 and 1870 Censuses, Ophelia was listed as single and living with her parents. We have no record of her being married previously, but intriguingly enough in her Find A Grave record, Ophelia is listed as Ophelia D. Goward Stewart. This could simply be an error, an extra name not recorded or an indicator of a part of Ophelia's life we do not know about.

1930'S GANGSTERS ROB THEMUNDEN STATE BANK

Ed Glenn, Director/Curator, Republic County Historical Society and Museum

The 1930's were a time of great social upheaval and uncertainty in the United States. The Great Depression had left between 22% and 25% of American workers unemployed. Businesses, large and small, failed and money was extremely tight. Industrial production dropped by 50%! Many people borrowed too much to stay afloat and bankruptcies spun out of control. Vast numbers of people lost their housing and huge numbers of people depended on soup kitchens and bread lines to survive.

Previously printed in the Belleville Telescope, by Ed Glenn.) The Roaring 20's in the United States was a period of a massive economic boom in which we saw amazing technological advancements, including the use of automobiles, telephones, moving pictures, radio, aviation, and electronic appliances. It was also a time where the United States experienced a stock market boom. In fact, the stock market quadrupled from 1920 until 1929. It seemed nothing could go wrong. The stock market crash of 1929 in what is now seen as the result of excessive stock speculation and a wildly overvalued stock market. The resultant Great Depression shook America to its core.

Early in the Depression, people lost trust in banks as a number failed. Bank rushes were common with depositors wanting to get whatever cash they had, causing many more banks to fail. Several so called "bank holidays" were ordered by the federal government, closing down local banks completely. The government eventually intervened to insure sufficient cash reserves at banks.

Into this chaos was the unforeseen impact of the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act of 1919. This prohibited the sale and consumption of intoxicating beverages such as liquor, beer and alcohol. Kansas's Carrie Nation and a host of others had convinced Congress that alcohol consumption was evil and destructive to families and the nation. It became abundantly clear that a majority of Americans did not agree and the manufacture and sale of illegal, or "bootleg" alcohol become a major industry.

Because(beer and spirits were illegal, the criminal element quickly identified alcohol as a major source of highly lucrative income. Bootlegging was common everywhere, and this included Republic County in the 1920's and 30's. (Some illegal liquor sales continued in Republic County until at least the 1970's, but that is a story for another day.)

So we now have a situation in which people are very desperate for survival, criminal elements had been provided opportunities for easy money through liquor sales and banks were known to be stocked with ready cash. It does not take a genius to see what was coming next!

Criminals organized themselves to rob banks as really quick and easy money. John Dillinger, Ma Barker, Bonnie and Clyde, Machine Gun Kelly, Baby Face Nelson and Pretty Boy Floyd became household names with bank robberies in small towns throughout the Midwest and Plains states. J. Edgar Hoover began to pursue these gangsters and created the "Ten Most Wanted" list as a part of his public relations campaign to both enforce the law and gain inside Washington power for the FBI and himself as the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. His law

Salt Creek Playboys-A 1970's Republic County Dance Band
Ed Glenn, Director/Curator, Republic County Historical Society & Museum

SALT CREEK
Side 1
1. DON'T STOP IN MY WORLD
2. SEND ME NO ROSES
3. YOUR CHEATIN' HEART
4. PRIDE
5. WASTED DAYS AND WASTED NIGHTS
6. KANSAS CITY
Side 2
1. GOOD HEARTED WOMAN
2. LINDA ON MY MIND
3. NO, I DON'T KNOW YOU
4. SALT CREEK BOOGIE
5. STATUE OF A FOOL
6. DADDY FRANK
Guy Chizek - Guitar and Vocal
Ed Glenn - Bass Guitar and Vocal, Terry Baxa - Drums and vocal, Engineering and Mastering - Larry Miller
AHK 20F77

Guy Chizek, Terry Baxa, Ed Glenn - about 1975

In attending the dedication of the Cuba Heritage Center on Saturday, July 17, 2021, many memories came flooding back. This writer attended high school in Cuba from 1966 to 1970 and has maintained friends there for over fifty years. Amongst the Czech Sokol exercise equipment and Doc McClaskey's display, there was a small display of dance band posters displayed in the wonderful new Heritage Center. All orchestras were of the Big Band type, popular from the 1920's to the 1960's. I had the unique pleasure of playing in a country dance band called the Salt Creek Playboys, later shortened to just Salt Creek. We worked together from 1969 to about 1977. Now seems like a good time to share stories of playing dances in Republic County during that time.

The Salt Creek Playboys started with a group of high school kids getting together to play the kind of music they liked. Guy Chizek of rural Agenda was the instigator of this effort. He had various different kids play with him at home for fun. After some time, Guy, neighbors Don Stolzenberg and Ed Glenn formed a core of the players, with Tom Erickson, Larry Bowman and others also playing. Don's dad, Eldon Stolzenberg taught most of us how to play guitar. The loosely formed band practiced at Guy's house, much to the chagrin of Guy's mother, Ruby Chizek. "Turn that down, you are too loud!" was her frequent refrain.

1958-Courtland, Kansas

Dr. Ed Glenn, Republic County Historical Society Museum Director & Curator

As we celebrate life in Republic County, Kansas it is important to look back to remember how we got to where we are today. This is a great aid in planning for the future, one of the many reasons history is important. Today we borrow from several historical sources to remember life in the great town of Courtland, Kansas during the Fabulous 50's, specifically 1958! We will make as much connection with today as possible.

Courtland has always been a town heavily influenced by agriculture. American and European settlers started coming to the area around 1870, with the town incorporated in 1892. Farmers and merchants were heavily represented in the early pioneers of the area. When the railroad came to ttrack of the Rock Island Railroad, Courtland (or Cortland as it was first spelled) was a good access point for shipping agricultural products. The rich river bottom ground was also a factor in agriculture being so important in and around Courtland.

1958 was a year filled with early rock and roll, the Eisenhower presidency and a Cold War with the Soviet Union. As students today learn to take cover from active shooters, school kids in 1958 learned to curl up under their desk in case of a nuclear attack. There was palpable fear about a U.S./Soviet war that spread to children as well as adults. Let's hope the school shooting information of today is of greater value than the atomic bomb drills!

An Adult Farmer Class was offered in Courtland beginning In January of 1958. The Vocational Agriculture building at the high school was used to offer young farmers in the area classes on how to weld and used other advanced for the day agricultural skills. The idea of coordinated farming classes was a fairly new idea. Previously, people learned to farm by growing up on a farm and/or learning from friends and neighbors. Of course, Kansas State University (in 1958 known as Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science) had agriculture classes available, and some returning World War II veterans used the GI Bill to pay for such education. Today, agriculture classes and Future Farmers of America are still available in the Pike Valley School District. With the precision farming techniques used today, and its sophisticated planting and harvesting machinery, it would be nearly impossible to farm without additional education.

In 1958, Harry Marty owned the Marty's Blacksmith Shop. This was nearing the end of the era of blacksmith shops. With mass production of farm and home goods and equipment, the blacksmith, once a vital part of any community, became unneeded. Being able to weld, cut and form metal at home also encroached on the blacksmith's business. Be sure to stop by the Republic County Historical Society Museum to see the old Blacksmith Shop and all of the tools needed back in the day. Also watch for live blacksmithing demonstrations that occur in Cuba, Kansas during various community events.

In 1958, the newly opened Kansas Bostwick Irrigation District headquarters building was open and operating in Courtland. Needless to say, the irrigation district made a massive difference in agriculture in the Courtland area. Orville Marquardt was the newly installed Bostwick Irrigation District Superintendent, coming to Courtland from Bertrand, Nebraska. In June of 1958, Lovewell Dam was dedicated, adding to the irrigation capacity in and around Courtland and Scandia.

It was reported at the time that the Bill Haskins farm northwest of Courtland had the first irrigation water from the Lovewell reservoir released on his land. The open canals of that area are now pretty much a thing of the past, with the majority of the Bostwick Irrigation District members now using center pivot irrigation systems for irrigation. Just as Mr. Marquardt oversaw the District in 1958, the Bostwick Irrigation District 2 is today in the very capable hands of Superintendent Pete Gile, keeping it all working for the benefit of local farmers and the entire area. Pete is also assisting the Republic County Historical Museum's efforts to update its Agricultural History of Republic County displays with irrigation information and artifacts and is very much appreciated.

In Courtland in 1958, one could sell grain crops to George Balch at the Farmers Union Elevator or George Ferguson at the Maher Grain Company. Today Central Valley Ag provides Courtland with grain services. While the sophistication and safety of grain elevators has increased significantly in the sixty four years since 1958, the ability to sell crops is still critical to agriculture production in Republic